

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT LONDON 10663 ACTION SECSTATE INFO GENEVA

EC BRUSSELS MTN GENEVA DATED 11 JUL 75

QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LONDON 10663

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, UK

SUBJECT: GROWING PRESSURE FOR IMPORT CONTROLS ON
FOOTWEAR

REF: LONDON A-507

1. NEXT TO TEXTILES, THE SECTOR IN WHICH THERE HAS BEEN
THE MOST PRESSURE FOR IMPORT CONTROLS IN THE UK HAS BEEN
FOOTWEAR.

2. ACCORDING TO A DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY OFFICIAL (R.S.
WILSHIRE), THE BRITISH FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY HAS BEEN FACED
SINCE EARLY 1974 WITH THE COMBINED PROBLEM OF REDUCED
DOMESTIC DEMAND AND RISING IMPORTS. ALL OF THE UK'S
FOOTWEAR MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY IS NOW OPERATING ON SHORT
TIME, IN SOME CASES THREE DAYS A WEEK. MORE THAN
3000 WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRY HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS.

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3. THE MAIN INCREASES IN IMPORTS HAVE BEEN: A) WOMEN'S

FASHION FOOTWEAR FRTM FRANCE AND ITALY; B) MEN'S LEATHER FOOTWEAR FROM STATE TRADING COUNTRIES IN EASTERN EUROPE; AND C) CHEAP RUBBER FOOTWEAR FROM THE FAR EAST.

4. THE FOOTWEAR HANUFACTURERS, SUPPORTED BY THE TRADE UNIONS, HAVE ASKED FOR A 20 PERCENT CUT IN IMPORTS FROM ALL SOURCES. THE GOVERNMENT HAS RESISTED THIS, AS IT HAS RESISTED A SIMILAR DEMAND FROM THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY. AS PRIHE MINISTER WILSON TOLD THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON MAY 23 (SEE REFERENCE), AN ACROSS-THE-BOARD CUT IN IMPORTS OF TEXTILES OR FOOTWEAR "WOULD BE BOUND TO LEAD TO OTHER COUNTRIES APPLYING SIMILAR MEASURES AGAINST OUR TRADE, FROM WHICH THE INDUSTRIES WE ARE TRYING TO HELP WOULD BE AMONG THE FIRST TO SUFFER."

5. THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN ACTION, HOWEVER, RELARDING IMPORTS FROM EASTERN EUROPE. FOLLOWING LONG AND DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS WITH POLAND, CZECHOSLOVAKPA AND ROMANIA, THESE THREE COUNTRIES AGREED THIS SPRING TO KEEP THEIR COMBINED EXPORTS OF MEN'S LEATHER FOOTWEAR (EXCLUDING SANDALS) TO THE UK AT A LEVEL BETWEEN FIVE AND TEN PERCENT BELOW THAT OF COMPARABLE EXPORTS IN 1974. THIS REPRESENTS A DECLINE OF SOME 300,000 PAIRS. MEANWHILE, IMPORTS FROM EASTERN EUROPE WILL BE CLOSELY WATCHED THROUGH A SURVEILLANCE LICENSING SYSTEM, WHICH WAS IN EFFECT BEFORE THE EXPORT RESTRAINT ARRANGEMENTS WERE NEGOTIATED.

6. THE GOVERNMENT, TRADE UNIONS AND THE FOOTWEAR MANUFACTURERS HAVE ALSO EMBARKED ON A JOINT STUDY OF ALL ASPECTS OF THE UK'S FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY, INCLUDING THE PROBLEM OF IMPORT COMPETITION. THIS STUDY WILL LOOK INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE.

RICHARESON
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